

What Happened After by purpleowlgirl64

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Summary: As I watch "Stranger Things", I am drawn to the fact that the Byers' house is where everything seems to go down. This got me thinking about how Joyce would react to the aftermath of everything that happened. I present to you, some one-shots of what happened after the events of the season two episode "The Gate". Spoilers for Season Two ahead!

1. Chapter 1

After the events of "The Gate", after everyone has calmed down. Joyce has decided to make everyone sandwiches.

Joyce opens her fridge to find the dead demo-dog:

Joyce (with a classic Winona face): What the f-(cut to credits)

We open again after the credits for this scene:

Standing a little ways behind her is Dustin and Steve. Dustin turns to Steve, "Told ya she'd be like that, you owe me five bucks"

Steve sighs and digs into his back pocket, soon slapping a five dollar bill into a smug Dustin's hand

Joyce turns to the boys, "Would one of you mind explaining to my why there is a dead Demogorgon-thing in my fridge?"

Dustin holds up a finger, "A demo-dog, Mrs. Byers, demo-dog"

With her eyes practically bugging out of her head, Joyce fires back, "That's not really important right now"

The curly-haired boy juts a thumb at Steve, "He's the one who stuffed the demo-dog in there"

Steve nods, "Yes, but Dustin cleared out the fridge to make room" He indicates the pile of stuff that had previously been in the Byers' fridge.

Looking nauseous, Joyce covers her mouth and mutters, "Whatever, I'm going to go order pizza. I don't care who did it, I just want my fridge back in order and that demo-dog outta my house" She then hurries from the room.

Dustin calls after her, "Sausage and anchovies for me, please"

Steve shoots him a strange look, "Dude, anchovies on a pizza?" Dustin nods happily.

Harrington shakes his head, "Whatever, just help me get the dead

demo-dog out of the fridge" and the two boys set to work doing just that.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter Two

Author's Note: Sorry for the delay in between chapters. I had an idea for this chapter, but it wasn't fully formed, I didn't know what I wanted to do with it yet...until now. I present to you now, Chapter Two!

"You can bury it in my backyard, but you better make damn sure my dog won't smell it, dig it up, and bring it back in the house" called Joyce from the back door, the phone to her ear as Steve and Dustin trudged across the backyard.

Dustin muttered to Steve, "I always thought Mrs. Byers was the meek one and Mrs. Wheeler was the controlling one, but I guess things have changed"

He was startled when he heard Joyce shout, "Hey, I heard that!"

Meanwhile, over at the pizza place, Greg, the one on line with Joyce, turned to his coworker Trent and asked, "Think she knows we've picked up and can hear everything she's saying?"

Trent shrugged, "Give it a few minutes, she'll realize"

Later on, back at the Byers' residence, while Steve and Dustin were scrubbing out the fridge (Steve was watching, Dustin was doing the scrubbing), Jonathan was gluing a plate back together and Joyce had just gotten off the phone with the pizza place, satisfied for once that her order was right, the doorbell rang.

Dustin looked up and asked, "Is that the pizza guy already?"

Steve shot back, "Shut up and get back to scrubbing"

Looking up from gluing the plate, Jonathan spoke, "Steve, you know, instead of watching Dustin scrub the fridge, I think you should be the one gluing the plate back together, since you're the one who broke it over Billy's head"

Steve shot back, "How do you know, you weren't there"

The other boy shrugged, "Mike and Lucas told me the whole play-by-play, in turn, of course"

Steve shook his head, "Nah, man, you're better at gluing the plate than I am"

Jonathan sighed, "Okay, then you think of a way to get back on my mom's good side after getting into a fight at our house and messing stuff up"

Before Steve could reply, Chief of Hawkins Police Jim Hopper entered the kitchen with Billy. Joyce soon entered the kitchen and walked around to stand in front of them. With a hand on Billy's shoulder, Hopper muttered, "Apologize to Mrs. Byers"

Billy sighed, glared at Hopper, sighed again, looked Joyce in the eye and with great difficulty spoke, rather hurriedly, "Sorry"

Increasing his grip on the boy's shoulder, Hopper muttered again, "Sorry for what" and then when the boy didn't reply, the chief sighed, "We're not leaving until you apologize to Mrs. Byers"

Billy stood in sulking silence with Hopper glowering at him.

Finally, the mullet-haired redhead spoke, "Mrs. Byers, I am sorry for getting into a fight in your house and messing a bunch of your stuff up, although, Steve started it"

Steve called out from where he stood at the fridge, "Hey, that's not important right now"

Ignoring this, Joyce asked, "Thank you for the apology. How are you going to make it up to me?"

Glancing around the kitchen, Billy sighed, "Uh, I could help clean up and fix stuff that got broken"

Nodding, Joyce replied, "That's a start. Steve could help with that, since he was a participant of the fight. Hey, you know what would really make it up to me and really show you're sorry for what

happened?" Billy shook his head.

Hopper noticed a rather mischievous glint in Joyce's eyes that he knew all too well, and opened his mouth to stop her, but she was already talking, "If I could give you a haircut, a real nice one. You'd look very handsome and put-together without that raggedy mullet"

Billy put a hand to his mullet and spoke, in a voice nobody in the room had heard from him before, "But I like my mullet. Besides, what will my father say?"

Hopper spoke up, "Don't worry about that, I'll talk to your father"

Joyce gave a little grin, "Do you want to be forgiven for the fight or not?"

Billy sighed and relented, "Okay, fine, what else do I have to do?"

Joyce replied, "Help Steve clean up the house. Trust me, you two might end up getting along. I made him and Jonathan clean up the house last year and look how well they get along now" Behind her, Jonathan and Steve just shrugged at each other.

Eager to change the subject, Hopper asked, "Anything I can do to help?"

The woman replied, "Yes, check in on the kids, make sure they're doing okay, make sure none of them have gotten into mischief and supervise Billy and Steve so that they don't get at each other's throats again"

Tipping his hat, Hopper answered, "Yes, ma'am"

At this, Steve and Dustin smirked at each other.

I (the Author) should note that the kids; Mike, Lucas, Max, and Eleven were in the living room, playing cards. They were working their way through all the card games they knew how to play. Eleven watched with interest and the others were eager to teach her.

As for Will? Well, he was sleeping. After what he just went through, it seemed like the best thing for him. He did wake up out of a dead

sleep as soon as the pizza arrived, though!

3. Chapter 3

Chapter Three

I just watched a whole bunch of Tide Superbowl ads, featuring Hopper himself; Mr. David Harbour, so really, I couldn't help myself. Tide ads existed in the 80s, right? Right? I'll go check after I post this

It was a fresh February afternoon at the Byers' residence. It had been raining off and on, so the kids; Mike, Lucas, Dustin, Will and even Eleven were cooped up inside, since Joyce didn't want them outside, in case it rained again. She didn't want anyone slipping and falling.

Joyce and Hopper sat on the couch folding laundry. An old Tide container sat on the floor between them, full of coins. Joyce was mentally reminding herself to take it to a place to get it all counted. "Man," she thought to herself, "If only coin counting was automatic. Maybe someday"

The Superbowl was on TV, but only Hopper was paying attention. Joyce was reminding herself to send Jonathan with the coins and the kids were running around, tossing a Nerf football to each other, teaching Eleven the basics of football and well, just having fun.

A minute later, when the football crashed into her telephone, knocking the receiver off the base, Joyce had enough! She wasn't about to pay for another phone, no, not this time, after all the ones she went through before.

Turning in her seat, Joyce called out, using her best "Mom" voice (that Karen Wheeler had coached her on), "HEY, either take it easy with the football, or take it outside!"

Hopper couldn't help but chime in, "Yeah, you're giving Jane, I mean Eleven the idea that it's okay to play football in the house and I don't like that"

Mike replied, "It's only made of foam"

Joyce shot back, "I don't care! Look, it knocked my phone off its base-thing. Now, please, take the ball-playing outside!"

Lucas complained, "But it's muddy outside! We'll get our clothes dirty. My mom doesn't like it when I come home with dirty clothes"

Dustin chimed in, "Don't worry, guys, we can slide in mud all we want, cause you know why?" The others shook their heads. He replied, "Mrs. Byers uses Tide and can get our clothes nice and clean again"

Eleven spoke, bemused, "What..is...Tide?"

In response, Hopper replied, "Go outside, get all muddy and come back inside"

The kids did as they were told, and came back inside, covered head to toe in mud, but grinning happily.

Hopper snapped his fingers, Mary Poppins-style and like magic, they were all clean again.

Joyce asked, confused, "Is it magic?"

Hopper turned to the camera, "Nope, its' a Tide ad"

The others just looked confused. Eleven questioned, "Who are you talking to? I don't get it"

Dustin replied, "Just go with it. He'll snap out of it in a few seconds, just wait"

Okay, okay, I know, it didn't make much sense, but I felt like it had to be written. Point is, it was just a piece of fluff that I wanted to write after seeing those Tide commercials.

4. Chapter 4

Chapter Four: At the Grocery Store

I work at a grocery store, so I figured it was only right to have my next one-shot be at the grocery store, except this one is in the 80s. Um, anyway, yeah, as you can probably tell from my previous stories, I'm a little bit Joyce-obsessed, but I can't help it because Winona Ryder plays the role so well!

Joyce may be small and petite, but boy can she push a shopping cart full to almost the brim with groceries. She was making her way down the freezer aisle, flicking her eyes left and right and then down at her list.

"Mrs. Byers, can I get this?" It was Dustin who approached the cart, his hat slightly askew on his head of brown curls. He held a box of sugary cereal. Here, Joyce hesitated because she wasn't sure if Mrs. Henderson would be okay with Dustin bringing home sugary cereal.

Biting her bottom lip, Joyce asked, "Is it okay with your mom?"

Dustin just shrugged. He then brightened and said, "I brought my own money"

Joyce chuckled, "Then you can get it, as long as you have your own money"

Shouting out a quick thanks to Will's mom, Dustin hurried away. Joyce just grinned and continued on her way down the aisle, stopping just as Billy and Max entered from the other side. Joyce had to admit that the two of them were getting along a lot better nowadays. She likes to think that the haircut she gave Billy helped quite a bit.

Max, of course, had her skateboard under one arm, as per usual. She approached Joyce just then and asked, "Hey, is Lucas with you guys?"

The older woman shrugged and answered, "You'll have to hunt him down. I've lost track of where the boys have run off to. Steve is

supposed to keep them wrangled, but I don't think he's doing a good job of it"

As it turned out, Max didn't have to do a whole lot of searching because just then, the boy of Max's affections, his usual camo headband (usually reserved for Demogorgon battles) around his head), Mr. Lucas Sinclair, jogged up to them, holding a rather cheap-looking package of fake mustaches.

He asked, putting on his charming tone, "Mrs. Byers, can I get this, please?"

Again, Joyce bit her bottom lip, not sure how to respond, but she had to admit that Lucas's charm had worked its magic, if only a little bit. Taking the package from him, she turned it around, saw the sticker showing it was a dollar and relented.

Tossing it in the cart, she replied, "Oh, I guess, but only because there's enough in there for each of you boys to have a mustache, and I will be taking pictures"

Lucas grinned at this, already dreaming up the photo opportunities and picking out the type of mustache for each boy to wear. He, of course, would have the handlebar.

Just then, Will joined them, holding an action figure. As soon as she saw this, Joyce told him, "You have your own money to buy that"

Will wasn't about to question how his mom knew what he was about to ask. I mean, it's his mom and he knew that moms can read their kids' minds. It was just a fact of life!

As Will hurried off with Max and Lucas, Mike ran up to the cart and asked, "Mrs. Byers, have you seen Jane, I mean, Eleven?"

Without a word, Joyce gestured down the aisle at the breakfast section where Eleven/Jane stood with the door wide open, gathering as many boxes of Eggo waffles that she could fit in her arms and she knew from previous experience, that she could hold a lot. Eleven knew this about herself.

Finally, Eleven shut the door with a flick of her head, turned and

hurried down the aisle to where Joyce stood with Mike and the cart. She smiled at Mike and said, "Hi, Mike, I picked out breakfast"

Joyce chuckled, "Oh no, sweetie, you aren't getting all of those. Your father would have a conniption"

Frowning at this new word, Eleven asked, "Conniption? What's that?"

Mike supplied, "Conniption, it means he might have a fit if you come home with all those boxes of waffles. Look it up when you get home, it could be your word of the day"

By the way, Hopper had only agreed to let Joyce take Eleven/Jane to the grocery store IF and only IF she wore a disguise, and Joyce could add things he needed to her list, also Eleven/Janes was instructed to stay on her best behavior.

Eleven frowned, "But I want these waffles" Uh-oh, Joyce could feel a storm brewing, and she suddenly wished Hopper was there with her.

Joyce stood her ground, "Your father said I could let you get one box, and it has to be the 12-count one" She added this, in case Eleven decided to try her luck with putting a bigger box in the cart.

Fixing her eyes on Joyce, Eleven repeated, increasing her grip on the many boxes piled in her arms, "I want these waffles"

Not one to be swayed or intimidated, the older woman replied, "Sorry, only one box, go put the rest back. I'm almost ready to check out"

This was apparently the wrong answer. Eleven stood her ground, glared at Joyce, held the boxes close to her body and repeated, "I want these waffles. Let me get these waffles"

Joyce replied, "Only one box"

Mike tried to reason with Eleven, "C'mon, I'll help you carry the other boxes back and put them away"

"No" Eleven replied stubbornly, "I want all of these waffles"

When Joyce didn't say anything, Eleven decided this was the final straw and with that, the lights began flickering, the freezer doors began slamming open and shut, and items could be heard rattling on their shelves, threatening to fly out if Eleven wasn't given what she wanted.

Mike shouted, as Eleven made all the boxes rise up and point towards Joyce, "STOP ALL THIS, JUST STOP!"

Just then, a bored-sounding voice on the intercom boomed, "Whoever is causing all the chaos around the store, please stop!" Of course, this did absolutely no good whatsoever.

Joyce watched as Eleven's normally pretty brown eyes began turning black with fury, her nose beginning to drip with blood, and her feet rising off the ground. She (Joyce) was busy racking her brain, trying to remember what Hopper would want her to do in this situation.

Just as Joyce thought things couldn't get any worse, a familiar voice growled over the intercom, "Jane Hopper, this is your father. Please snap out of it. Joyce will not get you the damn waffles, and after your behavior, she's not even gonna get you one box, so for the sake of the store, CALM DOWN"

This didn't register with Jane/Eleven. Joyce remembered the one thing that had been missing from the girl's life, and figured it would do the trick now.

Striding forward, Joyce put her hands on Eleven's shoulders, gently pushed her down so that her feet touched the floor, and then wrapped the girl in a tight hug. Almost immediately, the boxes fell to the floor and everything just stopped in its tracks.

And that, ladies and gentleman is how Joyce Byers saved the grocery store, and the rest of Hawkins, Indiana from Eleven going into full anger mode. Well, Hopper helped a little, but it was mostly Joyce with the Power of Love.

Hey, it's cheesy, but it worked! Also, side note, Steve was SUPPOSED to be keeping the kids wrangled, but he wasn't very successful. I meant to mention this in the actual story, but

forgot, so I'll add it in the Author's Note.

Also, Billy's haircut is a call-back to the events of Chapter Two of the story, well, my story. Chapters One and Two go together and then the rest will be one-shots.

5. Chapter 5

Chapter Five

Author's Note: This chapter will be a little different as it refers to events that happened between the Grocery Store chapter and this one, but it still happens after the events of Season Two, so it still fits in!

Also, this chapter might lead into another separate Stranger Things adventure that I'm working on, featuring a character introduced in this chapter, an original character, might I add. My next Stranger Things adventure will be telling this chapter from her point of view, which could be interesting.

Okay, enough of this, let's get on with the show!

It was a relaxing afternoon in the Byers'-Hopper house. That's right, Hopper and Jane/Eleven had moved in! It was the same old house that had been home to the tumultuous events of the past two years, but Hopper was working on adding more rooms and possibly a second story.

While Will worked nearby on what looked to be his math homework (but really he was working on stuff for an upcoming Dungeons and Dragons game), Eleven sat on the carpet, a black blindfold covering her eyes, and a chunky pair of headphones over her ears. The headphones were plugged into a nearby personal cassette player.

Seated side-by-side on the couch, Joyce was busy knitting (something Nancy had taught her, to help with anxiety), while Hopper looked over construction plans for renovating the house. He knew he wanted Jane to have her own room for a start, and Jane was excited about that.

Things were going smoothly until Jane/Eleven tore off the headphones, turned to Joyce and Hopper and spoke hurriedly and worriedly, "Someone in the Upside Down"

Looking up from her knitting, Joyce asked, "Who is in the Upside

Down, sweetie?"

Just then, Hopper realized something and swore under his breath. Joyce heard this and grabbed the Swear Jar from the end table nearest her. Shaking it at him, she spoke, "Not in front of the kids, Hop. You know the rules"

As Hopper sighed and grunted as he moved to take his wallet from his back pocket, a displeased expression on his face, Will asked, "What's the matter? Is there someone in the Upside Down?"

Eleven was the one to answer this as Hopper dropped a dollar into the jar, and Joyce set it back on the end table, looking satisfied, "Someone like me"

Will frowned, "What do you mean, someone like you?"

Tapping the number "011" still on her wrist, Eleven answered, "Another someone with a number"

Hopper supplied, "You're talking about the girl with the number 035 on her wrist, right?" The girl nodded.

Joyce nodded, "That would be Maggie, the girl that Jonathan was tutoring"

Hopper ran a hand through his hair, "You realize she was only coming over for tutoring because she knew of a way into the Upside Down, and she knew it was somewhere in your backyard, right?"

Jane/Eleven spoke up, "In the shed"

Joyce just looked confused. Getting up, Jane/Eleven said, "Come on, all of you, I'll show you"

As Will, Hopper and Joyce followed her from the living room, Hopper asked, "How do you know all this?"

Eleven replied, "She and I have a connection in our minds" which only got Hopper more confused.

Pretty soon, the four of them entered the shed, which was still in the

same state from when they had questioned Will. Steve had haphazardly thrown everything that Hopper had thrown out of the shed, back into the shed, so Hopper spent a few minutes moving things so that they could have room to move around.

Jane pointed to the ground. Joyce asked, "What's there? Can you tell us?"

Nodding, the girl bent down, brushed away leaves and debris and finally uncovered a trap door with a handle carved into it. She pulled the door open and let it fall back onto the floor behind it, sending up a cloud of dust that got everyone in the vicinity sneezing, coughing and waving the dust away with their hands.

When the dust cleared, there was a set of stairs leading down into darkness. As Hopper handed out flashlights and led the way down, Joyce muttered to herself, holding onto Will's shoulders for support, "How did I not know this was back here?"

Will spoke, "I knew this was back here, Mom! This was our secret hang out before we moved to Mike's basement"

Hopper called over his shoulder, "Not a secret anymore!"

Finally, all four of them found themselves in a dark underground area with floor and walls made out of hard-packed dirt. Will resisted the urge to look around to see if he and Mike had left anything behind. He highly doubted it though, because the move had been quite some time ago!

Meanwhile, Eleven used her fingers to move away dirt from one of the walls until a pinkish-reddish barrier was revealed. Joyce recognized this from when she had torn away her wallpaper, desperately looking for Will. She shivered at this memory and pulled her son closer.

As soon as she did this, a pair of hands could be seen from the other side, slapping against the barrier. A faint voice could be heard calling out, "Somebody please help me! I want out!"

Joyce stepped forward and asked, putting a hand on the barrier,

finding it just as cold and vaguely slimy as before, "Maggie, is that you?"

The voice replied, "Yeah, it's me! Can you get me out? I've tried using my powers, but I can't! I don't think I'm strong enough"

Hopper called out, "Why didn't you tell us you went in there, in the first place?"

Maggie's voice answered, "I knew you'd try and stop me, and my father really needed the footage" Hopper just sighed and slapped his forehead.

Will shouted, "I told you this was a bad idea, and you went ahead and did it anyway, how could you?" The girl didn't answer.

Taking a pocket knife from his breast pocket, Hopper called out, "Stand back, Maggie, I'm going to use a very sharp knife to get you out"

Maggie's footsteps could be heard receding and then there was an audible thump as if she had fallen.

Concerned, Joyce asked, "Maggie, are you alright?" No response.

There was a definite tense atmosphere as Hopper got to work, using his knife to cut away at the barrier. Finally, he got a rip down the middle, put his knife away and used his hands to make the hole bigger. Maggie could be seen on the other side, laying on the ground, not moving.

Before Hopper could make another move, a Demo-Dog came creeping into sight. The chief of police reached for the gun in his holster, but there was no need. Instead of pouncing on the girl and tearing her to shreds, the Demo-Dog gently sniffed at Maggie and then used one of his facial flaps as a tongue to lick her face.

Will gasped, "Is that demo-dog actually friendly?"

Joyce whispered, "I think so"

Hopper took a step forward, but at the sound of this, the demo-dog

whipped his head up, hissed at the man, turned and galloped away, frightened by the man's sudden presence and possibly territorial of its new friend.

Not sure what to make of this, Hopper easily scooped the girl up and carried her out of the Upside Down and back into the underground chamber. Joyce reached over and brushed a few stray strands of hair out of the girl's face, which looked pale. This was, of course, not a good sign.

Hopper, followed by Joyce, Will and soon Eleven (Eleven stopped to close the barrier and move the dirt back into place), carried Maggie up the stairs, out of the shed, across the backyard, and back into the house.

After Joyce moved her knitting and Hopper's construction plans out of the way, Hopper lay the girl down on the couch. Joyce then covered her up with a quilt and then turned to Hopper, "What now, Hop?"

Hopper replied, "Now, we wait for her to wake up"

Stepping forward, Eleven took one look at Maggie and said, "She needs fluids, rest and saltine crackers. I think she'll be just fine" The girl paused and added, "She might have eaten some berries, so she might have some stomach trouble. You shouldn't eat the berries in the Upside Down" She spoke as if she had experience in this matter.

Joyce asked, "How do you know this, about her?"

Shrugging and tapping her head, Eleven/Jane just smirked, "Our minds are connected, remember?"

And that, is how Eleven/Jane was able to rescue her fellow Hawkins Lab rat from the dangers of the Upside Down and how Maggie aka 037, discovered that there were friendly demo-dogs in the Upside Down, who knew?

Author's Note: This was partially in response to a reader who asked where the demogorgons are in this story. Well, I'm not really the kind of writer who can come up with a good

Demogorgon Battle Story, so I decided to write a piece where some of them are friendly!

You'll be able to find out more about Maggie and her side of the story in another Stranger Things adventure that is currently a work-in-progress.

Also, the whole mind-connection between Eleven and her fellow lab rats is just something I invented so that there was a semi-plausible way Maggie could be rescued from the Upside Down.

One more note about Maggie. As you'll find out in my next story, she got as far as getting a number tattooed on her before she was rescued. With the tattoo, however, she was able to have that mind-connection with Eleven. You'll find out more in my next story, so stay tuned!

6. Chapter 6

Chapter Six

I just recently rewatched "The Gate" and realized I remembered the details of the episode wrong. I just wanted to write this little piece to sort of make things right in the Stranger Things universe.

Steve sat in his History class, trying to concentrate on Mr. Yates as he droned on about World War 2, or something like that, could have been World War 1. The main thing he was focused on was his stomach and how hungry he was. He was thinking about the corned beef sandwich he had packed for lunch.

As soon as Mr. Yates turned to the chalkboard to draw a diagram, Steve felt something hit his right shoulder blade from behind. Trying to be as stealthy as possible, he turned in his seat, spotted the folded note on the ground by Heather Kitteridge's feet and then bent down to grab it.

On his way back up, he made a mental note of how nice Heather looked in her new pink sweater (or rather how her chest looked), turned back in his seat, and unfolded the note. He immediately recognized Jonathan Byer's scrawl.

It read;

"Will told me last night that Mike told him that the fight was so tense, he mixed up the details in his head. As it turned out, it was Billy who broke the plate over your head, not the other way around. I'm sorry (NOT) about trying to blame it on you. Just wanted to clear things up.

PS: I get to tutor Maggie aka Shakespeare Girl, score, right?"

(Steve's POV (point of view) from here on out)

I just smirked, turned the note over and wrote a note of my own,

"Yeah, maybe she could tutor you in Shakespeare. You could really

use it"

I then folded the note back up, turned around, caught Jonathan's eye and threw it the best I could. Thanks to two summers of pitching, the note landed right on his desk and caught his attention right away.

Of course, I barely had any time to congratulate myself because I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. Turning, I found myself looking up at Mr. Yates, who looked very annoyed with me. He spoke, "Detention, Mr. Harrington, third one this week" and then walked back to the chalkboard.

I ran a hand through my hair and sighed before picking up my pen and reluctantly returning to the dreaded task of note-taking. Maybe that Maggie-girl can tutor me in the art of note-taking. She's the best at it, from what I've seen!

Man, am I going to get a lecture from my parents when I get home! Oh well, I don't care....or do I? Huh, when is lunch? I'm starving!

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Joyce Gets Obsessed

"Damn it, Will, where are you?" muttered Joyce under her breath as she sat in her car in its parking space outside the arcade where her son and his friends liked to go and play arcade games. She and Will had agreed upon a time and it was currently past that time with no Will.

Joyce was quickly entering into "worried mom territory", which was not good, especially after the events of the past year where Will had his mind taken over by that-that, thing, and after the year before that where he got taken to the Upside Down. At this point, Joyce couldn't help but be worried about her son who was late.

Checking her watch for the millionth time, she leaned on the steering wheel (making sure that she didn't lean upon the horn, although she wanted to, because that's what Karen does to get Mike out of the arcade), and stared through the windshield at the brightly-lit arcade, biting on her lower lip.

She was busy debating whether or not to go into the place like the Mama Bear she was, or to stay in the car and wait for her son. Finally, she decided on the first option for several reasons; one, she wanted to know her son was safe, two, she was afraid that a Demogorgon had somehow gotten loose in the place, and three, well, she needed to pee, so maybe there was a bathroom in there she could use.

Squaring her shoulders, she unbuckled her seatbelt, climbed out of the car, shut the door, locked it and strode across the parking lot. Upon reaching the door, she flung it open and entered the busy, noisy, bright arcade.

After locating and using the bathroom, she went off in search of her son, except was distracted by the Redemption Center, behind which a bored, pimply teenager stood, wiping down the long glass counter.

Joyce stopped as soon as she spotted a hat hanging on the wall behind the teenager.

The hat was very familiar to her because it looked the same as the one she wore almost every single day in middle school (she wanted to hide her face, and plus, hats were allowed) until it reached the point of falling apart at the seams. Her mom had pleaded with her to throw it out, but Joyce had steadfastly refused.

Fast forward to when Will was about three or four. Joyce had taken to wearing the hat again and Lonnie (her ex-husband) despised the hat because it hid her beautiful features. Plus, it looked raggedy and stupid (the hat, not Joyce).

One day, during a particularly loud fight in their backyard, Lonnie decided that the hat had to go, so he yanked it off of Joyce's head, threw it in the air, aimed his gun at it, pulled the trigger and with a horribly loud bang, the hat was blown to smithereens over the shed. Inside the house, little Will started crying.

Joyce slapped him (Lonnie) as hard as she could across the face and then hurried inside to comfort Will, leaving Lonnie in the backyard.

Fast forward again to the arcade. The teenager asked, "Want the hat? It's only 1500 tickets"

Frowning, the shorter woman shot back, "For the hat?" She didn't understand how that hat could cost so many tickets to redeem, but she wanted a piece of her past back, so she figured she could earn it, but how?"

Nodding, the teenager replied, "Yep, and if you play any of those games" he paused to gesture out at all the games, from Skee-Ball to Dig-Dug before he went on, "and earn enough tickets, you can have the hat"

Joyce replied, "Yeah, I can do that" and that's just what she did. After using all the coins in her wallet, she had to run out to her car to grab the Tide container that was still full of coins and needed to be sorted. Hey, at least she had gotten it from the floor by the couch to her car! Progress!

Meanwhile, Will had just run out of coins. He sighed, "Well, I guess that means we're done for the day"

Dustin held up a finger, "Not true, we can convince your mother to let you have some of the coins in that Tide container"

Eleven, who stood by Mike asked, "She still has that?"

The curly-haired boy grinned, "That she does! Plus, I bet she's here to pick you up"

Mike glanced down at his watch, "Yeah, about a half-hour ago! Damn it, Will, you're making your mom worry again!"

Dustin asked Will, "When does she not worry about you?" Will just shrugged.

Will ran from the arcade, but had to stop just outside the front door to admire his calm surroundings and take note that it was back to normal; no giant smoke monsters in the red-orange sky, no flashes of the Upside-Down, no nothing!

Pushing aside a gnawing fear that something would happen again, he stepped off the curb and hurried across the small parking lot to his mom's car. Upon reaching the passenger-side door, he pressed his face to the window and grinned when he saw the orange laundry container sitting on the floor in front of the seat.

Excited, he drew back and tugged at the door handle. He was puzzled to find it locked and then realized that OF COURSE his mom would get sick of waiting and go inside to look for him. He knows his mother all too well!

As soon as Will reentered the arcade, Lucas took his arm and spoke, sounding concerned, "Uh, Will, I think you should see this"

The boy with the bowl-haircut asked, "Is it my mom? Is she okay?"

Lucas just shook his head, "C'mon, you need to see for yourself"

Pretty soon, the two boys joined Max, Eleven, Mike, Dustin and a few other kids who were gathered to witness Joyce glued to an arcade

machine, her hands working the controls, her eyes focused intently on the bright screen and the Tide container by her feet. Will had never in his life seen his mom so intently focused on anything!

Dustin put a hand on Eleven's shoulder and told her, "Here's your word of the day, El, obsession"

The girl nodded and repeated, sounding the word out, "Obs-sess-sion. Okay, what does it mean?"

Gesturing to Joyce, the curly-haired boy answered, "That, that, El, is the very definition of obsession"

Mike sighed, "It means getting so attached to something that you can't think about anything else"

Lucas sniggered, "Like you and El?"

Rolling his eyes, Mike decided not to take the bait and instead said to Eleven, "Like you and Eggos"

Nodding, the girl replied, "Yes, I do like my waffles. Obsession, I like that word"

Nervously tapping her mother on the shoulder (getting no response), Will asked, trying to make his voice heard over the sounds of the arcade, "Uh, Mom, what exactly are you trying to achieve? High score, what?"

Joyce answered, "I need the hat"

Mike glanced over at the Redemption Center and asked Will, "Which hat is she talking about? There's like four different kinds"

Will had to walk past the machine his mom was attached to, to get a better look at the redemption center. There he spotted a baseball cap that looked exactly like the one he's seen in pictures of his mom when he was three and four. He then remembered his mom telling him about his dad shooting the hat with his gun.

Turning to Mike, who had joined him, Will spoke, after pointing out the hat and explaining the significance, "We gotta get the hat for my

mom. It means a lot to her, like it got her through middle school"

Dustin spoke importantly, "Like my hat. I'm not the same without it" He took off his iconic hat to reveal the mess of curls underneath, "See, different guy" He put the hat back on and adjusted the brim.

Just then, the redheaded skater girl joined them, Max spoke, "I think I can help"

Dustin grinned, "Yes, you can! You can rack up a whole lot of tickets in no time"

The girl shrugged modestly, "I don't know about that"

Lucas jumped in, "Seriously, how do you think you got the nickname "Mad Max"?"

Max glanced around at the arcade games that had her name on the top of their high scores list and had to admit that they were right.

Marching up to Joyce, she spoke, effectively getting the woman to turn to her (the game had ended and Joyce had just let out a very bad swear word), "Mrs. Byers, how many tickets do you have?"

Joyce shrugged and handed Max the handful of tickets that she had managed to win in the past twenty minutes. Max knew this was not a lot. She said, "Okay, you keep playing this game. We're going to help you win tickets, okay?"

The older woman smiled, "Enough to get my hat?"

Nodding, the redhead replied, "Yes, to get the hat. We're going to take some coins out of this container here, but we will leave the rest" As she spoke, Max knelt to the carpet and got herself a generous amount of coins from the orange container. Righting the container, she got to her feet and scurried away to rejoin her group.

Max passed out an even number of quarters to Mike, Dustin, Lucas and Will, making sure to leave enough for herself. She then spoke, "Okay, go off and win as many tickets as you possibly can! We need to get that hat for Mrs. Byers" and the group split up.

It took another half-hour, but the group had managed to individually rack up more than the 1500 tickets required to redeem the hat. They were quite proud of themselves. Max, who had earned the most tickets, counted up all the tickets (plus the ones Joyce had earned) and took them to the counter.

Once she had the hat in her hands, she waved the group over. When they got there, she told them to split up the rest of the tickets evenly. They could decide for themselves what they wanted to spend their portion on. The teenager running the redemption center was surprised at how civil everything managed to be!

After everyone got what they wanted, Max led the group back to where Joyce stood, still attached to the arcade machine. Just as they arrived, the game ended and a frustrated Joyce let out a string of swear words, which resulted in Mike covering Eleven's ears. He didn't want Hopper knowing what Eleven overheard.

Finally, when the swearing was out of her system, she turned to find the group standing exactly where they had stood before, except Eleven now clutched a big pink fluffy bunny with a heart sewn on its chest. Joyce had to smirk at the mental image of Hopper's reaction to Eleven's prize.

Clearing her throat to get Joyce's attention, Max stepped forward and said, "Mrs. Byers, we pooled all the tickets we earned, well, I got the most, and got you this" She brought the hat out from behind her back.

Will watched as his mom put a hand to her mouth, looking teary-eyed, took the hand away, gasped, "Oh, you guys, thank you!" She took the hat and placed it on her head, her hands shaking as she did so. It fit perfectly.

She then started crying as she pulled everyone into a group hug. Only Max complained about the affection, but she didn't mind because she was too busy proud of the fact that she had managed to make Mrs. Byers the happiest she's been since, well, in a long time.

Joyce was so happy to have her hat back, that she forgot all about having to wait for Will and decided to take the group out to a movie

and dinner, her treat. Eleven was happy about this because the girl had never seen a movie before in her life! This was going to be quite a treat for her!

When Joyce got ready for bed that night, she felt overjoyed to place her new hat where her old hat had sat for years; on her dresser by the plush owl that Bob had gotten for her at a tiny little toy store when they went on their first date. Joyce had named the owl "Owlfonso" a name Bob had suggested, since he had such a penchant for punny names!

Climbing into bed, she spoke, before turning off her lamp, "Goodnight, Bob, goodnight Owlfonso" She paused, "Goodnight new hat" and with that she drifted off to sleep.

Author's Note:

This one is a total fluff piece! I had a mental image of Winona Ryder as Joyce, so intently focused on an arcade game that nobody could get her attention, while the Party (you know who they are) stand and stare at her in bewilderment. Thus this story was born and I was itching to write it!

I think this story fits nicely somewhere between the Tide Commercial and Chapter Five, but I'll let you decide!

The hat being blown to smithereens was mostly an exaggeration, because I was picturing the moment in "Doctor Who" when River Song snatches the fez off the 11th Doctor's head, flings it into the air and then blasts it with her gun. Then again this was Joyce's memory, so who knows?

One more thing; the plush owl that Bob had gotten Joyce (in my story, at least), can actually be seen in the background on Joyce's dresser in the scene from Season 2, when Hopper comes into the room and Joyce is sitting either on the floor or on her bed. Being a lover of all things owl-related, I couldn't help but notice this little detail and decided to add it to my story. I have my own Owlfonso; a Beanie Boo owl with a red and green scarf. He's the mascot for my bowling team. Man, I love being a writer!